'dual use' goods and technologies to India's civilian nuclear programme, although policy-related restrictions continue to remain in place. India and the United States have initiated five programmes related to nuclear safety. Exchange of visits by U.S and Indian nuclear regulatory officials has also commenced.

(b) India and France are cooperating in a number of areas related to nuclear safety. There have been discussions on cooperation in other areas of mutual interest.

Passports pendency at RPO, Hyderabad

3078. SHRI S. M. LALJAN BASHA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a vast backlog of passport applications in Hyderabad;

(b) the number of applications presently pending with the RPO, Hyderabad;

(c) whether it is a fact that passports are issued at a leisurely pace at Hyderabad;

(d) whether any inspection has been done of the general atmosphere of the office; and

(e) if so, the details of such an inspection report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH):(a) No.

(b) The number of applications pending with Passport Office, Hyderabad as on 30.7.2003 is 262.

(c) No.

(d) and (e) Passport Office, Hyderabad was inspected on 24.4.2003 by the Secretary in charge of the Central Passport Organisation.

Proposed measures for foreigners entering USA

3079. SHRI P. PRABHAKHAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the U.S. administration would make finger printing and photographing mandatory for all visa-carrying foreign visitors entering U.S.A. from January, 2004;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether India would also adopt similar measures in respect of foreign visitors on a reciprocal basis; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes. According to press reports and official statements of the US Government, the finger-printing and photographing would become mandatory from January, 2004 onwards for all visa carrying foreign visitors entering the USA. The US Government has taken these steps on security grounds.

(c) and (d) The visitors of all nationalities will be subjected to the new measures which are not aimed at Indians specifically. The question of applying reciprocity has not yet been examined by the Government.

Al-Qaida network in Bangladesh

3080. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the newly emerging Al-Qaida network in Bangladesh; and

(b) if so, the nature and extent of the new terrorist outfits, its *modus operandi* and the threat perception arising therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) The presence of a number of radical Islamic groups have been reported in Bangladesh such as the Jamaitul Mujahideen Bangladesh, Shahadat-e-al-Hikma and Harkatual Jehad-Al-Islami. A number of hide-outs of such organisations were raided by local authorities particularly in areas of northern Bangladesh. Arms and explosives were also recovered testifying to the militant tactics being used by these groups. Activities of these groups have been reported particulary in areas close to the West Bengal border. The Government continues to monitors reports of these activities and to review its implications on our security.